

Application No. 09/932,430
Amendment dated December 13, 2005
Reply to Office Action of July 13, 2005

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of this application in view of the foregoing amendments to the claims and the following comments.

In the Office Action mailed July 13, 2005, claims 39-69 all were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a), as allegedly obvious over U.S. Patent No. 5,346,217 to Tsuchiya (the "Tsuchiya '217 patent") in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,162,133 to Peterson (the "Peterson '133 patent"), taken either by itself or further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,440,011 to Hocknell et al. or Japanese Publication No. 2001-029518.

Applicants respectfully traverse these rejections, for the reasons set forth below.

The Invention

Before addressing the rejections of claims, it will be helpful first to briefly summarize Applicants' claimed invention.

Independent claim 39 defines a method of manufacturing a golf club head, including the steps of: (1) forming a unitary body having a crown, a skirt, a sole, and a face portion that defines a front opening; (2) forming a striking plate [separate from the unitary body's face portion]; and (3) attaching the striking plate to the unitary body's front opening. Further, the crown is defined to have a crown transition region extending rearwards about 20 mm from a crown/face portion junction, with the thickness of such crown transition region being less than 0.8 mm. In addition, the unitary body's face portion is now defined to project inward from the crown, skirt, and sole. This latter feature is evident from an inspection of FIG. 1 of the application, which depicts one preferred embodiment of the invention. The "face portion" immediately surrounds the striking plate 19, and it supports the support tabs 25 that are used to position the striking plate while it is being welded to the unitary body.

Independent claim 54 is similar to independent claim 39, except that instead of a *crown* transition region it defines a *sole* transition region, of thickness less than 1.0 mm, extending rearwards about 20 mm from a sole/face portion junction. As with claim 39, claim 54

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now defines the unitary body's face portion to project inward from the body's crown, skirt, and sole.

Independent claim 69 defines a method having all of the features of independent claims 39 and 54, as well as a number of additional features relating to the nature of the unitary body and the striking plate.

The Rejections of Claims 39-69

In rejecting the claims, the Examiner asserted, at page 2 of the Office Action, that the Tsuchiya '217 patent discloses a method of manufacturing a golf club, including steps of "forming a crown (10b), a skirt (rear body), a sole (10c), a striking face (21), and front opening (Fig. 4)"; "forming a striking plate (10a)"; and "attaching the striking plate (10a) to the front opening (Fig. 4)." This assertion is misleading, because the identified "striking face (21)" and "striking plate (10a)" are one and the same component. The Tsuchiya '217 patent fails to disclose *both* a "face portion projecting inward from the crown, skirt, and sole" *and* a *separate* "striking plate."

The Examiner further asserted, at page 7 of the Office Action, as follows:

"... It is conventional in the golf club art to fabricate the club head either with a unitary body or welding separate club parts to form a club head . . . Tsuchiya discloses the club head can be formed from separate piece to optimize weight distribution and enhances flexibility of the club parts such as the crown portion, which improves COR. Alternatively, Peterson teaches it is desirable to form a club head by unitary construction to enhance manufacturing repeatability with respect to loft, lie, and face angle."

Applicants agree with the Examiner's statements that the Tsuchiya '217 patent discloses forming a club head from separate pieces welded together and that the Peterson '133 patent discloses forming a major portion of a club head as a unitary body. However, Applicants respectfully disagree with the Examiner's conclusion that these two patents, taken together,

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would have suggested Applicants' claimed invention. As the Examiner, himself, acknowledges, the two patents address competing desires: the Tsuchiya '217 patent seeks to "optimize weight distribution and enhance[] flexibility . . . which improves COR," and the Peterson '133 patent seeks to "enhance manufacturing repeatability with respect to loft, lie, and face angle." Neither patent contains any suggestion at all that their teachings be combined in the manner Applicants have claimed.

Applicants' claimed invention calls for a striking plate to be attached to a separate unitary body having a particular configuration, including a crown, a skirt, a sole, and *a face portion projecting inward from the crown, skirt, and sole to define a front opening*. Neither the Tsuchiya '217 patent nor the Peterson '133 patent discloses such a club head configuration. Tsuchiya's striking plate wraps around the face/crown and face/sole transitions, and Peterson's striking plate is integral with the crown and sole. Thus, even if the teachings of the two patents were to be combined, as the Examiner asserts would have been obvious, the resulting combination would *not* provide a unitary body having the specified "face portion projecting inward from the crown, skirt, and sole."

Amended independent claims 39, 54, and 69 all define a method of manufacturing a golf club head incorporating a step of "forming a unitary body having a crown, a skirt, a sole, and a face portion projecting inward from the crown, skirt, and sole and defining a front opening. The cited references, including the Tsuchiya '217 and Peterson '133 patents, fail to show or suggest such a method. For this reason, the § 103(a) rejection of amended independent claims 39, 54, and 69, as well as dependent claims 40-53 and 55-68, are improper and should be withdrawn.

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Conclusion

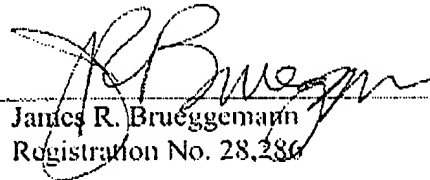
The foregoing amendments and remarks should place this application in condition for allowance. If any matters remain outstanding after consideration of this Amendment that the Examiner believes might be expedited by a telephone conference with Applicants' undersigned attorney, he is respectfully requested to call at the number indicated below.

Date: December 13, 2005

Respectfully submitted,

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